



Cold



👁 601 ✓ 94 ★ 72

Chapter 1 by Jaremie

He is known by one name, "Raven". Wielding a longsword and a single-handed battle axe, both as dark as a starless night sky. He comes with no armour, for his strength and speed are above those who are mortal. His name brings shivers to those who speak of it. The most infamous assassin has been summoned from the flaming gates of hell, to serve it's master one last time.

Chapter 2 by Harlander



"You have summoned me from the endless flames... for this." The legendary assassin's voice was filled with a singular disgust. His eyes were like distant, ancient stars burning with hatred.

"Look, buddy, it's really hard to get good coffee these days. There's only one place doing the blend I like."

If looks could kill...

"Oh, and get one of those chocolate-covered flapjacks as well."

Chapter 3 by Harlander



Raven strode down the city street, his dark, hooded cloak billowing about him. He could not turn down his contract, this insulting insult. He had only one choice of Raven, the patron saint of killers, when any street ur

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The city was strange. Centuries had passed since Raven last trod the earth. The noise was incredible, even by comparison to the largest cities he'd known in the past. Horseless carriages careened through the streets. Music echoed from buildings. The number of people, all so healthy and well-fed, was staggering.

The inescapable draw of his contract drew him forward. Pushing his way through the surging crowds, he came upon a building. Its style was unknown to him, but he could recognize a trader's shop when he saw one. The sign over the huge window - a king's ransom worth of glass - glowed with an unearthly light, spelling out the words JOE'S COFFEE.

He pushed open the door and stepped inside when a voice cut through the city's noise.

"Not so fast!"

Chapter 4 by R



It was a stranger sight to see than all of this new world. Raven had seen the rise and fall of far too many civilizations, and while this was peculiar, the world was bound to change. This, however, was unexpected.

Elsabeth Thorne stood, dressed in the strange garb of this time, red hair longer now and tied up in a ponytail. He had not seen her in, well, since whenever the last time he had set foot on the surface.

"I don't know what your plan here is, who you've been sent to kill, Raven." Elle muttered harshly, hand pulling out a handle that extended in to a longsword almost as big as her, "But if you think I will let you go through with it, you are mistaken. New York is under my protection, and no elder being or disgruntled witch will destroy it or harm any of it's citizens while I stand guard!"

He drew his own weapons, ready to fight. Elle was a worthy opponent, or she had been in the past. Now, when the world had aged greatly and she had not aged a day, he was certain that it would be at least an interesting diversion. In their last fight she hadn't had the heart to kill him.

Maybe this time she will have gained the edge needed for victory.

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Suddenly there was a flash of light and a loud crash. "This is the Police! Drop your weapons!" Fear flashed through Raven's mind. What looked very much like a spell sigil.

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"You're a mage now?" He asked, raising an eyebrow. Magic was useful, sure, but there was a clear line between mages and fighters, or at least there used to be.

"What of it? Get over here so we can teleport away and finish this fight." She grumbled. "Unless you really want to just complete your order and return to hell for all eternity,"

Maybe if the order had been as more than an errand boy, he wouldn't have followed through. But he was Raven, patron of killers, most dangerous assassin the lands and sea and even the heavens had ever seem. He would not just back down from a challenge. So he stepped forward, and the police and sirens vanished.

Chapter 5 by Jess Ash



He fell with a soft thump onto hard, dry, ground. Spitting the sandy grit from he mouth, he got up to his knees. A slender hand extended into his line of vision. Elle was offering him assistance in getting to his feet.

Scarred lips curled into a sneer, and he brushed her hand away. Standing, he asked, "Did you bring me hear to fight or talk, woman?"

Elle's eyes narrowed dangerously. "Do not test my patience Raven. I have done you a great service. You should be thankful."

"Hah!" He spat, "I did not ask for your help, mage." He used the last word as if it was an insult.

She flushed a light red, and looked away. Nevertheless, her angry words continued, "How dare you! You should know the rules of a host by now. Oh, but wait," she said, a high, irritated note making its way into her voice, "you follow no rules but your own, ASSASSIN!"

Raven's eyes flashed dangerously, and Elle quickly realized just how far she had pushed the immortal being.

"Look, I had no choice but to turn to magic. These days, you can't just walk around with a sword strapped to your back!" She moved toward him. "Things have changed, Raven."

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"You dare!" She shouted with indignation, "I should send you straight back to the hell from whence you came. I imagine your master will be very pleased to hear you have failed to complete your task."

Raven smirked. Elle may be skilled with a sword, but she often failed to remember he was a few centuries older than her, meaning he had far more knowledge than she usually accounted for in their verbal jousts.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?" He said, with an air of indifference, "But, of course, you don't have that kind of power. The higher mages haven't granted it to you yet, have they?" His smirk only grew as he leaned in closer. "You've been deemed," here he made air quotes, "'unready.'"

Her face turned bright red and she managed to sputter, "Y- you have no right!"

"It's not about my rights, love," he used the pet name to irritate her. "It's about the facts. And the facts are, you don't have what it takes to be a mage."

Chapter 6 by Jess Ash



Her eyes narrowed into a glare, and she looked away. "Shut up!"

Raven only smiled, enjoying the position he found himself in. "Oh, Elle. Once a great warrior, now brought to the level of juveniles. 'Shut up, Raven!'" He threw his voice higher, mocking her.

Elle turned away, stalking across the hard, dry landscape. She held her head high, attempting to show him that his insults did not affect her. In reality, this only pleased him more.

"Come on, Elle, don't be like that," he crooned. "I thought 'shut up' was delightfully witty."

He strode over to her, catching up effortlessly. "It's alright if you find you must turn to other arts to retain your power and dignity. It's not uncommon for the older warriors to lose their abilities over time. Really, it's nothing to be-

Suddenly, she whirled on him. "Do not test my patience, Raven!" Her eyes flashed dangerously. "I have been a good host, but I have had enough. It is now clear that these few centuries in hell have not improved your quality of your manners!"

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"Manners?" He scoffed. "You dare speak to me about manners, mage? At least have the dignity to actually FACE my enemy on the battlefield. There was a time you would have done the same. But, of course, you threw that away when you decided to become a mage. And a powerless one, at that."

"I may not be able to send you back to Hell, but I still have power." She smiled now, thinking of the power she held over him. "How would you like to be covered in cockroaches? Or find the dirt around you turned into a pit of snakes?" Her smile only grew, and she leaned in close. "Admit it. I'm finally more powerful than you."

"More powerful than me? Have you forgotten who you are dealing with, woman? I am Raven, patron of killers, most dangerous assassin the lands and sea and even the heavens have ever seen. Once, when you were Elisabeth Thorne, patron of warriors, and the most feared soldier I had ever met, perhaps you could have made such a claim. But now, you are Elle, lower mage. You have no place to make such a claim."

Her lips twisted into a wry smirk. "It's not about my place, assassin. As you said, it's about the facts. And the facts are, I can think of about 50 different ways to beat you right here."

"Then prove it."

She swallowed hard. Surely, Raven was not suggesting what she thought he was? Raven smirked across from her. She would never accept. She didn't have the guts.

"I, Raven, hereby challenge you, Elisabeth Thorne, to a duel."

Chapter 7 by R



There are a few things you need to know about Elisabeth Thorne.

The first is that was never her name. No true warrior, feared by all, would go by there true name - especially not one with loved ones. So much of her was fake now. So much of her was empty.

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The third is that her magic isn't exactly new. The world has changed, sure, but magic is older than swords. Raven might view it as weaker, he who preferred fists to wits and then swords over magic, but anyone who wields fire in their hands wields power.

The fourth is that she hasn't worked alone in a long, long time.

Hana sat on the wall overlooking the scene, twirling the spear in her hand. The fox goddess looked down amused. She hadn't seen Elle duel in a long time - sure she'd save the knight when it got down to it, but for now she was content to watch. This would be good.

A'isha sat beside her, glowing with her magic. The three of them were a team, but Elle fought her own battles. This wasn't up to them to decide. It was up to her.

Elle drew her sword and lit it on fire - a teasing call towards Raven's account of mages. He thought she wasn't brave enough. He thought a lot of things. He thought her hesitation was in fear.

She smiled and rushed forward. They didn't call her the Crimson Avenger for nothing. No, he was right, she was unwilling to start this, but not because she thought the assassin would win.

It was just the little doubt of if she wanted to kill him.

Their blades clanged with a fly of sparks, Elle finally angry. Nothing got her more serious than when someone raised swords, nothing got her more ready to fight than when someone was willing to fight her. Her hesitation had vanished in an instant, replaced by cool confidence.

Raven grinned. Sure she had changed a lot, but at her core Elle was still the same, driven by the battle and the damage and the pain. Maybe this would be a decent fight after all.

He was being pushed back. Elle had always been a sprinter, always started with her best move and hoped to win the battle in an instant. It was a good thing he was one for the long game.

There was a muttering of ancient words, and suddenly his free arm transformed into a black, stony, monstrous thing that came forward and gripped on to it tightly. He let her blade go, backing off and summoning another sword. It fell to the ground still burning but snapped where Raven had

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"I thought you despised magic!" She called out, throwing a fireball which Raven dodged. "I thought magery was the path of the weak! Look whose weak now, oh fearful one!"

"Oh, I've had this for a while." Raven told her with a sharp smirk. He'd thrown her off with that. "A gift, from hell. They were worried I wasn't as good as promised. Now, I'm unbeatable."

"I can understand their worries." Elle said with a laugh, jumping up and over him with a twist, her sword slashing down leaving a cut of fire in it's trail. His hair was singed but he caught her blade again and sliced at her arm, only barely missing her this time.

With a wave of her hands she sent a hundred fiery blades down on to the battlefield, cutting him but none doing to much damage. She drew a third sword and rushed forward, her breath just starting to become a pant, while Raven was hardly sweating.

"Ooh, this is getting fun." Hana muttered with a grin. She turned to her fellow watcher, black hair turning snow white and golden eyes alight with joy. "Do you think Elle would mind to much if I joined in? I really want to fight this guy before she kills him."

"Her victory isn't guaranteed." A'isha replied, still sitting cross legged and memorizing the spell. "Do you really want to risk Elle's anger when she's in a bloodlust?"

"I suppose that's fair." Hana mumbled. "Let's see how the fight goes."

Chapter 8 by R



The fight dragged on, long and torturously. Despite all of their posturing, it was an even match. This was a battle to see who could last longer, and given their shared immortality, it was a battle to see who's mind could last longer.

The hours dragged on, and both were breathing heavily, eyes still full of hate and passion. You did not back off from a duel. Not ever.

And then, out of the blue, came a car

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A'isha summoned a wind storm, fully distracting Raven enough to give Elle a chance to ca
the white-haired girl stop
off of her clothing

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Out of the car stepped a grunted looking man with what looked like a neckbeard.

"I don't know what you think you're doing, but I gave you an order!" He shouted out, glaring at Raven. "I expected it to get done!"

"This is a duel, mortal." Hana muttered, though she could see the yell had given Raven a chance to cut at her leg, leaving a slash in her tights and a bleeding cut. "You have no right to intervene."

"Don't you mortal me. I am Addison, the feared technomancer, and I summoned that man there to bring me coffee! I don't care what this is, he needs to grab me some right now."

Raven growled in annoyance, but he didn't stop fighting.

"Why didn't that work!" The 'technomancer' whined, staring at the two fighters. "I'm the one who summoned him! He has to obey my every wish!"

"Please." A'isha muttered, only half paying attention. "Weren't you listening? This is a duel. No rules apply to them but those of the duel itself. Your contract is broken my friend."

"What?" Addison stared, eyes wide. "But then how am I going to get my coffee? I spent ages working on that plan."

"Really? You must be a horrible 'technomancer' if you can't even teleport some coffee." The witch said with a laugh. "Do you two want us to get rid of this guy for you?" She called out towards the fighters.

"I don't know who you are, but please." Raven said in between blows, causing Elle to laugh, and also to kick at his knees, but that was just the fight.

"Hey, isn't that the loser wizard who's been pestering after Chava?" Elle asked. "You know, the one who wants all her giant magic robot designs and also to marry her or whatever?"

"Don't make fun! These designs are a work of art, as is she!" The technomancer yelled, miffed.

and A'isha raised her fingers, ready to teleport him away, when suddenly something else decided to happen.

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In a whirl of black mist the man disappeared, leaving a hole in the ground before them in the abandoned place. She glared at all of them.

"Stop this!" She said in a commanding voice, and everyone froze. If you'd been around the block long enough, you'd have heard that voice before.

It was the demon queen.

She was dressed all in black and stared at them with sharp eyes, focusing on Raven. "You failed me." She said harshly. "You let all of this," She gestured to the scene around them, "come in the way of a successful deal."

"I apologize, my lady Lucy." Raven said, dropping down to one knee. "But you have to understand, the deal was-"

"I don't care if it was a stupid deal! Take the stupid deals! They're easy, and the victims don't even realize that their soul is mine in exchange!" She called out, angrily.

"Wait, what?" Addison asked, eyes wide, but no one listened to him.

"My lady," Raven said, not looking up, worry staining his voice. "You must understand, the way things flowed, this was inevitable -"

"Inevitable? You're the one who challenged her!" The Demon Queen yelled. "Because of this duel, you've placed the deal in forfeit!" She screamed, and thunder cracked in the distance. "We're leaving. Now."

"But the duel-" Raven started, but then he stopped. No feud was risk angering the Demon Queen. He picked up his sword and bowed his head, vanishing with her in the puff of smoke.

"Aw man." Elle muttered. "I was looking forward to winning that."

"You weren't guaranteed victory." A'Isha added in. "That was a pretty fair fight. He could have beaten you."

As if, Elle replied. "Oh my god, you two bet money on this, didn't you? You bet money that I was going to lose! A'Isha, how could you?"

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The pair shared a look. "I know," Elle said. "None of us would ever do anything like that. I know I wouldn't."

Elle stared at them. "I can't believe you. My two best friends, betting on my duel. At least you were betting for me." Hana shifted her eyes away. "You were betting for me, right?"

In the background, Addison the incredibly feared technomancer started to slink away. Maybe it was best if he laid low for a while. And bought his own coffee.

Yeah, that was a good plan.

the end

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